

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution



Travel



Inside: Hard to resist the sweet smell of onions, L2

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[CANADA SPECIAL SECTION]

SHIPSHAPE FOR TOURISM



The small town of Pictou created a replica of the ship Hector to celebrate the sacrifices of Scottish immigrants who, in 1773, landed in what would become Nova Scotia.



Photos by SCOTT FOUST / Special
The side trawler Cape Sable, at the Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, represents the kind of motorized fishing vessel that replaced schooners.

Tour Prince Rupert, before the crowds

By ANNE Z. COOKE
For the Journal-Constitution

Prince Rupert, British Columbia — It's nice to be first on the scene. Or among the first. I would like to have seen the Columbia River when its waters ran free and the Yukon during the gold rush. To have explored Kenya in 1930 and Mexico in 1940.

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► Please see **PORT, L6**



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Steve Haggerty

[CANADA SPECIAL SECTION]

Port: Heyday of cannery faded in 1960s

► Continued from L1

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"It won't benefit anybody, us or the tourists, to try to be like everyone else," he said. "We want to avoid Alaska's mistakes."

Still, tourism promises to help the local economy, in decline since 2001, when the last pulp mill closed. As we walked downtown, window shopping and looking in stores, the empty aisles and half-stocked shelves told the story. In the pharmacy, where we stopped to compare drug prices, we were the only customers. In the Safeway, no more than a dozen shoppers were filling their baskets.

But Prince Rupert isn't about shopping. It's all about being outdoors. We spent a sparkling sunny day following humpback whales with Prince Rupert Adventure Tours, on a high-powered lemon-yellow boat, the luxurious Georgia Master.

The next day, we crossed the harbor to Pike Island, led by Tsimshian guide John Haldane, who donned a hat and native dress for a tour of the island's pre-European-settlement sites, the oldest dating back 10,000 years.

The cultural highlight of our visit — and Prince Rupert's leading tourist attraction — was the Winter Feast tour at the Museum of Northern British Columbia, ranked among Canada's top 10 museums. Located in a traditional longhouse built of old-growth red and yellow cedar logs, the museum focuses on the history and art of the Tsimshian and Haida people, about 40 percent of the regional population.

The exhibits, part of a collection of arts and crafts made from the pre-European era to the present day, reveal a love of bold design and bright colors and a fine eye for craftsmanship, whether for decorating canoes and blankets or designing ceremonial masks, drums and headdresses.

"Whenever I'm feeling down about something, I come in here and look at this headdress, made before the people had metal," said Sam Bryant, the museum's artistic director and a member of the Killer Whale Clan. He stopped in front of a favorite piece — a crown-shaped headdress with miniature figures made from mountain goat horn inlaid with abalone. It was carved, he said, with a sharpened beaver's tooth.

Afterward, Bryant led us to the museum's longhouse to participate in a shortened version of the Winter Feast celebration, a potlatch held to celebrate weddings, promotions of chiefs and similar clan milestones. Donning costumes, Bryant and a small performance group, accompanied by two drummers, danced three traditional ceremonies and distributed gifts — tastes of local foods — to the onlookers.

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The North Pacific Cannery in Port Edward was the last of dozens built along the coast of northern British Columbia. Once a self-contained community, it's now a tourist spot. Photos by Steve Hays



A totem pole marks the Alaska State Ferry dock at Prince Rupert, home of the Museum of Northern British Columbia, which focuses on the history and art of the area's indigenous peoples.

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Instead of fishing, we saved our last day for a visit to the restored North Pacific Cannery, in nearby Port Edward, the last of dozens built along this coast. The cannery, a self-contained company town, was built entirely on a long row of wooded decks set atop pilings sunk into the Skeena River bank.

When the cannery opened in 1889, the millions of salmon gathering near the mouth of the river seemed inexhaustible; the operation ran around the clock from May through September. Seventy-nine years later, when the fish were nearly gone, it closed. (Since then, last-ditch conservation projects have restored a portion of the annual spawning run.)

The cannery had its own general store, post office, church, processing plant, machine shop, net loft, boat-house, cottages for managers and crowded shacks for workers. Those long summer days on the river, later remembered in letters and diaries, swung between heaven and hell, slave labor and summer camp, with families living and working in close quarters.

"The fishing industry was divided along racial and gender lines," said curator Sophie Cormier, throwing a switch that started the assembly line clanking into action. The managers and storekeeper were Caucasian, Chinese workers made the cans and the Japanese built the boats and mended the nets, she said. Tsimshian men, who traditionally spent summers in native fish camps, netted the salmon, the women worked on the processing line, and the children, mostly unsupervised, kept one another company.

IF YOU GO

Getting there

Expect to pay about \$500 round trip from Atlanta to Vancouver, British Columbia. Take the ferry from Vancouver or fly from Vancouver to Prince Rupert's airport on Digby Island. Most plane flights include the combination bus-and-ferry shuttle service that crosses from Digby to Kaien Island.

Getting around

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Information

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Tour British Columbia's Prince Rupert before the crowds

By ANNE Z. COOKE
For the Journal-Constitution
Published on: 03/25/07

- What to know if you go



Steve Haggerty

(ENLARGE)

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